

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5648
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE 293
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 5382

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION - OCT 21-27

REF: BEIRUT 5259 (DTG 210720Z OCT 77)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THIS WEEK, THERE WAS RELATIVELY LITTLE FIGHT-
IN THE SOUTH. WILDLY EXAGGERATED RUMORS OF KIDNAPPINGS AND
MURDER GREATLY INCREASED TENSION IN BEIRUT AND ELSEWHERE. THE
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PHALANGE RENEWED PRESSURE ON SHIA RESIDENTS OF JBEIL DISTRICT TO
TRY TO FORCE THEM TO LEAVE THE AREA. ABOUT 200 PEOPLE DEMON-
STRATED IN WEST BEIRUT TO PROTEST AGAINST THE CONTINUED DETENTION
OF THREE JOURNALISTS OF THE NEWSPAPER AL KIFAH AL ARABI. BOOK-
SHOPS IN WEST BEIRUT RECEIVED WARNINGS NOT TO SELL THREE CHRIS-
TIAN NEWSPAPERS. THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOR WITHDREW A
THREAT TO CALL A GENERAL STRIKE. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

APPROVED DECENTRALIZATION OF THE LEBANESE UNIVERSITY.
END SUMMARY.

2. SOUTH RELATIVELY CALM.

DESPITE SOME EXCHANGES OF ARTILLERY AND SMALL ARMS FIRE, THERE WAS AGAIN RELATIVELY LITTLE FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH. THE SECOND MEETING OF THE ISRAEL-LEBANON MILITARY ARMISTICE COMMISSION TOOK PLACE AT ROSH HANIKRA ON OCTOBER 25. SPEAKING TO THE PARLIAMENTARY FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE THE PREVIOUS DAY, FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS LINKED THE FAILURE TO ACHIEVE A "SATISFACTORY CONCLUSION" IN SOUTH LEBANON WITH "CONSIDERATIONS WHICH ARE CLOSELY CONNECTED TO THE DIFFICULTIES OBSTRUCTING THE CONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE."

3. INCREASED TENSION IN BEIRUT AND ELSEWHERE.

A. WILDLY EXAGGERATED RUMORS OF KIDNAPPINGS AND MURDERS HAVE GREATLY INCREASED TENSION IN BEIRUT AND OTHER PARTS OF LEBANON. TRAFFIC BETWEEN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT HAS DECLINED MARKEDLY, AND THE ADF HAS INCREASED ITS ALERT POSTURE AND ROAD BLOCKS IN THE CITY. THE CABINET DEVOTED MUCH OF ITS SESSION ON OCTOBER 26 TO SECURITY MATTERS AND "TO DEFEATING THE CAMPAIGN OF FALSE RUMORS WHICH HAS PROVOKED A PSYCHOSIS OF FEAR," ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT-LE JOUR.

B. MOST OF THE RUMORS HAVE PROVED UNFOUNDED, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE SOME SUBSTANTIATED INCIDENTS. ON OCTOBER 21, THE MURABITOUN KIDNAPPED AND BEAT THE CHAUFFEUR OF A PHALANGE OFFICIAL, AND THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PHALANGE RETALIATED BY KIDNAPPING FOUR MUSLIMS (SEE BEIRUT 5292). ALL THE HOSTAGES WERE SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED, ALTHOUGH THE CHAUFFEUR IS HOSPITALIZED. ON OCTOBER 25 A CHRISTIAN WAS KIDNAPPED IN WEST BEIRUT AND SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED. IN ADDITION, A DRUZE WAS KILLED RECENTLY IN THE SHUF VILLAGE OF KAHR QATRA, ACCORDING TO EMBASSY SOURCES.

4. PHALANGE PRESSURE ON SHIAS.

THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCES SENT REINFORCEMENTS TO THE PREDOMINANTLY CHRISTIAN DISTRICT OF JBEIL ON OCTOBER 25 TO PROTECT SHIA RESIDENTS THERE, ACCORDING TO DATT AND EMBASSY SOURCES. THE PHALANGE HAS RENEWED PRESSURE ON THE RESIDENTS OF ONE OF THE DISTRICT'S VILLAGES, HJULA. SHIA RESIDENTS OF THE VILLAGE BELIEVE THIS IS PART OF A GENERAL PHALANGE CAMPAIGN TO FORCE SHIA TO LEAVE THE DISTRICT. THEY ALSO SAY THAT THREE SHIA WERE FOUND KILLED NEAR THE VILLAGE OF ANNAYA EARLIER THIS MONTH.

5. DEMONSTRATION AGAINST DETENTION OF THREE JOURNALISTS.

ABOUT 200 PEOPLE DEMONSTRATED IN WEST BEIRUT ON OCTOBER 22 AGAINST THE CONTINUED DETENTION OF THREE JOURNALISTS FROM THE LEFTIST NEWSPAPER AL KIFAH AL ARABI, ACCORDING TO PRESS AND EMBASSY SOURCES (SEE BEIRUT 5326). ORGANIZED BY AL KIFAH AL

ARABI, THE DEMONSTRATION BEGAN PEACEFULLY BUT BEGAN TO GET OUT OF HAND AND THREE PEOPLE WERE INJURED AND SEVEN ARRESTED. THE JOURNALISTS WERE CAPTURED ON SEPTEMBER 29 IN SOUTH LEBANON AND REPORTEDLY TAKEN TO ISRAEL. THEY WERE SUBSEQUENTLY MOVED BACK TO THE MARJAYUN AREA IN SOUTH LEBANON, WHERE THEY ARE NOW BEING HELD BY CHRISTIAN MILITIA.

6. THREAT TO PREVENT SALE OF CHRISTIAN PAPERS.
BOOKSHOPS IN WEST BEIRUT HAVE RECENTLY RECEIVED LEAFLETS WARNING THEM NOT TO SELL THREE CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPERS: THE PHALANGE'S AL AMAL, THE NLP'S AL AHRAR, AND THE FRENCH LANGUAGE DAILY LE REVEIL, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS ASSOCIATION. THE PHALANGE AND NLP HAVE RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT THEY WOULD PREVENT THE SALE IN EAST BEIRUT OF PAPERS PRINTED IN WEST BEIRUT, IF THE THREE CHRISTIAN
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PAPERS WERE NOT DISTRIBUTED. SO FAR THE THREE PAPERS HAVE REMAINED ON SALE.

7. LABOR WITHDRAWS STRIKE THREAT.
DESPITE CONTINUED DISSATISFACTION, THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOR ON OCTOBER 21 WITHDREW ITS THREAT TO STAGE A GENERAL STRIKE AND ACCEPTED THE CABINET'S OCTOBER 19 DECREE ON PAY INCREASES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THE CONFEDERATION SPECIFIED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE MUST BE ADDITIONAL RAISES WHICH WILL MEET ALL OF LABOR'S DEMANDS BY MAY 1, 1978. (THE CABINET'S DECREE PROVIDED PAY HIKES OF 15 TO 35 PERCENT FOR EMPLOYEES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR, WHILE THE CONFEDERATION HAD DEMANDED A MINIMUM RAISE OF 45 PERCENT FOR ALL EMPLOYEES. SEE OCTOBER 14 SITREP). BEIRUT'S GARBAGE COLLECTORS AND OTHER MUNICIPAL WORKERS WALKED OUT ON OCTOBER 20 AND 21 TO PROTEST THE CABINET'S DECISION, BUT RETURNED TO WORK FOLLOWING THE CONFEDERATION'S ANNOUNCEMENT AND THREATS OF LEGAL ACTION BY THE GOVERNMENT.

8. DECENTRALIZATION OF LEBANESE UNIVERSITY.
THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ON OCTOBER 26 OFFICIALLY ENDORSED DECENTRALIZATION OF THE LEBANESE UNIVERSITY AND APPROVED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNIVERSITY BRANCHES IN THE MOHAFAZATS OF NORTH LEBANON, THE BEKAA, AND SOUTH LEBANON. BRANCHES WERE AUTHORIZED FOR THE FACULTIES OF LAW, POLITICAL SCIENCE, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES.
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